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ABSTRACT

This resource guide provides a definition of and an evaluation design for community education programs. The author defines a community education program as a planned response to ongoing community needs which is operationalized through coordination and scheduling of locally available resources to given target populations. The following evaluation techniques are suggested and defined: (1) model identification, (2) legal analysis, (3) colleague criteria evaluation, (4) statewide overview and (5) tracking. (NS)

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A DEFINITION OF

and

AN EVALUATION DESIGN FOR

C O M M U N I T Y E D U C A T I O N P R O G R A M S

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE OUTLINES

in the same series as :

ED 120-617 OUTLINES USEFUL FOR PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO A COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAM

ED 125-126 A TEAM APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT BY OBJECTIVES, WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON MANAGERIAL SELF-EVALUATION

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Community Education
Evaluation Design

1. Definition:

A community education program is an organized and systematic group self-improvement project. Such a plan of action is a response to on going community needs analysis and is operationalized in coordinating and scheduling locally available resources and services for given target populations.

2. Glossary:

Community:	A geographically identifiable group having common interests.
Education:	Self-improvement within a given community in school, out of school, and in leisure.
Program:	A public and legal entity open to all without discrimination and with affirmative outreach to community members in need.
Project:	One of many activities undertaken by a local program.
Organized:	Structured; integrated; able to plan, schedule, and implement appropriate activities or projects.
Systematic:	Thorough, and regular; methodical; providing inter-related and non-duplicated services from one central source.
Needs Analysis:	A continuous determination of where the community is (status quo) and where it needs and wants to go (self-improvement).
Plan of Action:	A clear, concise, and consistent statement of achievable and measurable goals for a given time period. This plan must be developed with involvement of the community served.
Resources:	Public buildings, property, equipment, funds, and personnel.
Services:	Educational, recreational, cultural, and other benefits that respond to the needs, interests, and services of a given community.

3. Evaluation

In addition to local evaluation plans developed on a program by program basis, offer technical assistance to Community Education Programs in the following areas:

A. MODEL IDENTIFICATION:

Through an analysis of demographic characteristics, programs with similar traits are clustered together for the identification of prototypes or models. Prototypes help in the understanding of common goals, common procedures, and common criteria of effectiveness applicable to a given subgroup of community education programs.

B. LEGAL DEFINITION EVALUATION:

Through an analysis of the minimum elements of a community education program as defined by the Federal Register, programs with similar legal characteristics can be clustered together. Such clustering helps in the understanding of programs based in schools and outside schools.

C. COLLEAGUE CRITERIA EVALUATION:

Through an analysis of what community education program directors consider important and use to measure effectiveness, local program directors can self-evaluate their programs through informal peer review. Such self-evaluation is useful in determining necessary program self-improvement.

D. STATEWIDE OVERVIEW:

Through an analysis of model, legal, and colleague data from other programs across the state, local directors of community education programs can develop better needs assessment techniques and greater involvement of the community served.

E. TRACKING SYSTEM:

Through an analysis of what each community education program has done in the decision making process, local program directors can describe how key decisions were made. Such data can be used in developing guidelines for program improvement on a formative basis.

MODEL IDENTIFICATION

Part 1
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Origin

In September 1976, University researchers asked certain questions in an attempt to develop an empirical definition of Community Education in the State.

In October, State technical advisors formated these questions into a discussion document. Community Education Program directors revised the discussion document into a self-study outline that reflected statewide consensus.

In November, this self-study outline was completed by several local program directors.

Content

A copy of the demographic data self-study outline as revised and accepted by local program directors is attached.

Part 2
MODEL TYPES

A listing of model types and sites is attached.

MODEL IDENTIFICATION

The following are representative community education program models currently operating in New York State:

Model Type	Site Location
BOCES	Oswego
Community Involvement; Multi-Directional	Syracuse
Community Involvement Process; Regional	Elmira
Community, School, and Multi-Agency; Urban, Suburban, Rural	Ithaca
Dropout Prevention	Lafayette
Federal Career Education and CETA	St. Lawrence-Lewis
Inter-Agency; Parks and Recreation; City Government	Penfield
Neighborhood Development Corps; City Government Support	Buffalo
Rural; Senior Citizens	Central Square
Suburban	Rush-Henrietta
Teacher Corps	Potsdam
Town, Village, and School Government; Target Areas	Ossining

LEGAL DEFINITION EVALUATION

The "minimum elements" of a community education program as defined by the Federal Register (FR 40:240: Dec. 12, 1975: pp. 57936-7) have been analyzed to identify all observable components.

Each minimum element has been correlated to a YES/NO question to be used in self-evaluation by the project director and by the person to whom the project director reports. The following reporting code is used:

YES	identifies those elements that are present in the local program
NO	identifies those items that are not present in the local program
BLANK	identifies those items that are not applicable to the local program

One self-evaluation profile is submitted for each local project. When appropriate, a third party evaluation profile may also be developed although this would normally be unnecessary.

A tabulation of several local profiles would give a good idea of how these programs compare with national criteria.

COLLEAGUE CRITERIA IDENTIFICATION

Origin

In September 1976, local program directors were asked by State officials to supply brief responses to the following questions:

a) What are the most important components and characteristics of your program?
b) What measurable criteria do you use to determine success of each component and characteristic?

In October, this mandate was discussed at a statewide meeting in order to give specific examples of components, characteristics, and criteria.

STATEWIDE OVERVIEW

An overview of model, legal, and colleague data helps local program directors examine available criteria and ask questions helpful in the planning and evaluation processes that are part of each local program. For sample available criteria listed below, an appropriate question is given.

Available Criteria	Appropriate Question
Minimum elements listed in the Federal Register.	"Is the Federal Register definition adequate?"
Key program components recognized and ranked by professional colleagues and peers.	"What else must be taken into consideration in school-based and non-school-based programs?"
Effectiveness measures keyed to proposal objectives.	"What has been achieved?"

With such an evaluation perspective, new programs can chart movement and older programs can recognize improvement scores. In this way, programs across the State can work together on common goals whose success can be measured by mutually acceptable yardsticks.

TRACKING SYSTEM

Origin

In September 1976, local directors were introduced to the basic idea of a tracking system which enabled them to identify (a) the decisions that made the program work as well as (b) the decisions that didn't click.

In October, local directors were shown through discussion of a demographic survey instrument that a tracking system is essentially a description of how key decisions were made. The group reaffirmed the position that sound decisions depend upon sound data. The data identified for collection in the demographic survey instrument were data considered necessary for decisions on the local and State level.

In December, local directors sat down and reached common agreement on how a needs analysis should be conducted. Such a formal exchange of ideas was one way to identify "what worked" and "what didn't work." This identification process formed the first link of a practical tracking system that could grow into a large scale management information system. This exchange forced each director to compare "what I did" with "what others did in similar circumstances." For example, a consensus was reached that "selling" the community program was an important part of successful "needs assessment" when making the first contact with governing boards, community leaders, and community members. Similarly, it was agreed that community education succeeded when community members realized that "This program touches me where I live. It is not a remote agency, far away from home."

Purpose

Tracking systems have long had the objective of helping local program directors analyze and sharpen their own decision making process skills.

Outcomes

As a result of tracking typical key decisions, administrators became more aware of the following groups of decision-making questions, each of which has been identified by an adjective:

Description Adjective	Decision-Making Questions
Pragmatic:	What worked? What didn't work?
Inductive:	What data led to a "what worked" decision? What data led to a "what didn't work" decision?
Deductive:	What data did I have? What data did I lack? Did I make a pragmatically successful decision on inadequate data?
Projective:	What data do I now need? How much of it can I get? Do I have enough data to allocate resources rationally and prudently?

Tracking Is Evaluation

The type of evaluation provided by tracking has been commonly called "formative evaluation" (a 1972 term) or a "management information system" (a 1974 term).

Tracking has been equated with evaluation at several different levels:

Self-evaluation: When the program staff reached a consensus on "what works."

Peer-evaluation: When several program directors compared notes on "what worked" and offered suggestions on "what I would have decided and done."

Third Party Evaluation: When an outside observer impartially concluded that "What you did in that decision can help solve similar problems and get worthwhile results elsewhere."

CONCLUSION

As a result of the Needs Assessment of local program directors conducted from September to December 1976, certain needs emerged for the 1977-78 program year:

State Handbook
Advisory Board
Delivery System
Resource Guide
Training Workshops
Data System

Each of these has been analyzed on the following page in terms of the following parameters:

Short Identification of NEED
Its PURPOSE
TYPE OF PRODUCT Needed
Its SOURCE
Its FREQUENCY

Community Education Program Needs

NEED	State Handbook	Advisory Board	Delivery System	Resource Guide	Training Workshops	Data System
PURPOSE	Summarize best available peer and colleague judgment Categorize appropriate measures of success Publicize State approved priorities	Provide on-going needs assessment by involving community leaders Review the process that led to success of outstanding local programs	Organize regional representatives into "ready-to-go" action consultants Assist new programs on a regional basis	List available data, people, and things Identify sources: what, who, where, how to obtain these resources	Respond to needs assessments from local directors Sponsor and organize regional and statewide workshops	Document the present status and demography of Community Education Develop strategies for (a) recognition and visibility; (b) funding patterns
TYPE OF PRODUCT	DATA (booklet)	PEOPLE (meetings)	PEOPLE (list) (meetings)	THINGS (list)	PEOPLE (meetings)	DATA (report)
AUDIENCE	USA NYSED Local Directors Local Staff	NYSED Local Directors	Local Directors	NYSED Local Directors Local Staff	Local Directors Local Staff	USA NYSED Local Directors
SOURCE	NYSED Local Directors	Cross-Section of NYS Citizens	Established Local Program Directors	USA NYS Programs NYSED	NYSED Consultants Regional Representatives	Local Directors
FREQUENCY	Yearly	Bi-Monthly	Monthly	Quarterly	Scheduled	Semi-Annually